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Lincoln and Gettysburg After Fifty Years.

November 19, 1863-1913.

BY CHARLES A. KENT, A. M.*

Nearly five hundred years before the Christian era, Miltiades led a determined host of his Athenian countrymen against the Persians on the shores of the Attic Sea, and Marathon became historic. We recall it as recording a victory for the establishment of representative government and overthrow of despotism, and as marking the first instance, which has survived, of a custom of memorializing heroic deeds, in celebration by the state.

On the field of that great day a monumental mound, which remains to the present time, was thrown up in honor of the patriot dead of Greece, and their thousand Platean allies. Shortly after Greece vanquished her invading foe, it became a custom that at a great gathering of the people a funeral oration should be pronounced by some citizen of the realm, at a public concourse. Two evidences of this celebration of the state in memory of fallen heroes have come down to us from the mists of those far-off years. One is the funeral speech of Pericles, delivered presumably at Marathon, or in the suburb gardens of Athens, where great numbers of the dead of battle slept, wherein he likened Athenian heroism and civilization to a brilliant and guiding torch, handed on through the ages, to shed its light even "upon the pages of our own time."

The other testimony is in mutest marble, that of the Mourning Athene, found in excavation several years ago on the Acropolis at Athens. The figure typifies the youth and personality of the Greek nation of that ancient time, and

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speaks in eloquent stone of her grief over heroes who had fallen in the defense of their country, on the battle field.

It has come to the lot of our own proud republic, twenty-five hundred years after, to re-inaugurate the public testimonial to the soldier in the cause of right and of the nation in the right, and Gettysburg, in the terrors of its awful carnage of war, as well as in loyalty to the sacred dead—Gettysburg thrills all our hearts and lifts us to higher faith in the integrity of that nation we love, now stronger for the struggle, braver in its example, and more powerful, infinitely, in its union!

The development of representative government and of liberty are both consonant with the creation of this nation; and the terrible four years half a century ago were not fought in vain, and we now tender our poor tribute to the occasion and the man, in whose memory we gather, for recall of heroic deeds and heroic testimony.

The institution of human slavery had lingered from the misty days of the past, and slowly, but stubbornly, was opposed in its abandonment by the march of ideas of human right and conduct. The American nation, once entirely apart from the tribute of a mother country too long and too insistently intolerant with taxation and indifferent colonial management, found itself increasingly perplexed with the problem of human rights. The question of black slavery proved a constant apple of discord and an increasing menace to state harmony and coherent national life. The Articles of Confederation, written into the law of the land amidst the trials of war with England during the Revolution, proved inadequate to direct the affairs of a republic in modern times, after a trial of less than ten years. The Constitution, adopted in 1789, was now in turn to demonstrate its right to an existence, in the testing ordeal of civil combat. The years as they ran apace marked wider and wider divergence of interests and opinion in the sections known soon politically as well as geographically as the North and the South. Statesmen of older contests struggled with the problem, prescribing compromise, retaliation, colonization on distant shores, national purchase of slaves, and abolition. For forty years and more the North pleaded with the South and pacified selfish interests in all sections of the country where it was sought to

perpetuate chattel slavery. The patriotic hope for a perpetual union, the vision of a strong and united nation wherein every one might indeed be reckoned free, was breathed by increasing thousands as the years ran farther into discord, suspicion, inaction. But the god of destiny, through Abraham Lincoln, was to solve the problem of human slavery and national integrity on foundations as solid as the world, as enduring as time.

His life, whose history runs parallel to the decline and end of slavery in this country, found its beginning in the hills of Kentucky over a century ago. His youth and early manhood were spent in the territory of political compromise. His sympathies and the acquaintance of his kindred were with the South; his convictions and his sense of justice were with the North. The clanking of chains at an auction block in New Orleans in 1831 never ceased to ring in his sympathetic ear till thirty-one years later he struck the shackles from four million slaves. While a member of the General Assembly of Illinois, Lincoln placed himself on record against the cause of slavery, manifesting in obedience to the great conviction of his life, the courage to stand alone—the first requisite of a leader in a great cause.

His consuming ideal through the trying years before the war was a strong and perpetual union, wherein all men were to be free. He studied closely the trend of events, analyzed the effects of human thought and human conduct on affairs of national life, and saw, as afar, with keenest vision, the crisis approaching. A wave of prejudice and distrust, fanned by selfishness and the spirit of disunion, was about to sweep away centuries of growth of integral national life. From the heights of a great intellect and the fortress of a logical mind, above the loose morality of party politics, and above the storm of doubt and denunciation, Abraham Lincoln was courageous enough to dedicate the nation to justice in these words:

“A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe that this government cannot permanently endure, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved; I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided.”

¹ Extract from speech of Mr. Lincoln, Springfield, June 16, 1858.

Nominated at Chicago, the commercial and political key-stone in the arch of loyal states to the west and southwest, Lincoln's triumphant election to the presidency was seeming signal to the South to carry out withdrawal from the Union, and possession was at once taken of the forts, ships and war munitions in the region of disaffection. Secession had long been threatened and deliberately planned; now it was boldly acted upon as a public policy.

The situation at Washington was discouraging enough. Former friends, with lips sealed to silence by their fears, added to the gloom of uncertainty. Every department of the government was permeated with the virus of disloyalty. The very army was badly disorganized; the navy scattered. A cry for "peace at any price" arose from every side. Irrational partisanship lost sight for the moment of the moral prestige of a new administration and courted compromise. Powerful influences were at work in Europe with a desire, ill concealed, for the downfall of the American republic. France and England were only waiting for an opportunity to lend the rebellious South a helping hand. Vain, indeed, were the efforts at reconciliation. Sumter was fired upon. A divided nation sprang to arms and precipitated that bitterest of conflicts—a civil war!

With admittedly superior numbers, the first two years of the war saw too many victories to the South, with corresponding discouragement in the North. While the conflict began and largely continued in a sweep over the lands and estates of the South, it roused that section to a greater fighting spirit than could be shown by any people whose territory was not scourged by an invading adversary. It needs no great amount of history to convince us what this incentive can accomplish. Every brave man carries it in the deepest recesses of his heart, and reads his first willing duty in the eyes of the wife, the child, the mother or the sweetheart, to preserve whose sacred right to a peaceful home his life stands always as a ready sacrifice. The North was scarcely at all called upon for this effort, this self-denial in the presence of an invasion. That it were capable of yielding it when called upon need not be disputed. There is sufficient to be proud of in American manhood not to draw lines of polities or latitude in extolling the manhood, courage and fortitude

of men who marched and fought through our Civil War side by side or pitted against each other.

The reverses of Bull Run and Chancellorsville and the heavy sacrifices at Antietam and Shiloh soon demonstrated to the North the desperate character of the fight the southern armies were putting into the balance in the hope of victory. It is true, most of the conflict had been on southern soil, thus nerving the soldiers of that section to the fight a desperate defensive can offer, but Lee had actually invaded Maryland in 1862, and the frequent exchange of commanders of the Army of the Potomac, with McClellan, Pope, Burnside and Hooker, successively, directing affairs in the field, showed to the world that Lincoln had yet to find different material with which to forge the anchor to make fast the ship of state in the turbulent waves of awful battle, of an awful war.

There were grave political developments late in 1862 that had the two-fold effect of discouraging northern support of the war, as carried on, and of nerving Lee to again plan on invading the region north of Mason and Dixon's line. A numerous party, and one active beyond its numerical strength, had bitterly opposed the war. The Emancipation Proclamation had concentrated and intensified this opposition. During the hundred days which intervened between the announcement of Lincoln's purpose to put forth this proclamation and its actual promulgation, elections had been held in ten states of the Union. In these, Mr. Lincoln had, in the elections of 1860, a majority of more than 200,000; now, the opposing majority was 35,000. In 1860 these states sent 78 Republicans and 37 Democratic Representatives to Congress; now, they elected 51 administration and 67 opposition members. The draft, moreover, which was soon to go into effect, was vehemently denounced and declared unconstitutional by many, and threats openly made that its enforcement would be violently resisted. There was fair occasion for the South to be persuaded that any great success at arms gained over the Union army would elicit such a feeling throughout the North that the government would be compelled to desist from the further prosecution of the war. This opinion, that the people of the North wearied of the war, was not confined to the South, whose interests and feelings were so strongly enlisted, for the British minister at Washington had six

months before shared the same opinion and had so informed his government. The series of almost uninterrupted successes to the Confederates, defeating Burnside at Fredericksburg, foiling Hooker at Chancellorsville, resisting attack of Union gunboats at Charleston and Vicksburg, capturing Galveston, and, with the "Alabama" and the "Florida," creating havoc on the high seas with our merchantmen—all these seemed to need nothing more to invite a successful invasion of the North to secure a final triumph, set up a southern and seceding federation of states, secure the recognition of the same from Europe, and end the war.

The result at Chancellorsville had inspired the South with unbounded confidence in Lee, and there was universal clamor that the invincible Army of Virginia assume the offensive, carry the war beyond the bounds of the Confederacy and conquer peace on Federal soil. To carry out such a stupendous program, a comprehensive campaign was mapped out, with the ultimate design of the capture of Washington, the national capital, for by such performance there would be tremendous additions to the prestige of the Southern cause, since now foreign nations would have greater likelihood, according to usual custom, to recognize the rebellion and its hand-maiden, human slavery.

It was at once necessary for Lee to collect his entire force, except that engaged in the west, and concentrate in northern Virginia. In conformity to this plan, Longstreet's three divisions, which had been engaged south of Richmond, were brought up, one by one, toward the Rappahannock River. During the first week in June, 1863, therefore, the whole effective fighting force of Lee was concentrated near Culpeper, with the exception of A. P. Hill's division, which was left at Fredericksburg to mask the contemplated movement. Lee's first object of attack in view was by a rapid movement northward, and by maneuvering a portion of his army on the east side of the Blue Ridge, to tempt Hooker from his base of operations, thus leading him to uncover the approaches to Washington, thereby to throw the national capital open to a raid by Stuart's cavalry, to be followed by Lee himself, who would cross the Potomac in the neighborhood of Poolesville, and thus fall upon and capture Washington.

But Hills' display of forces across the Rappahannock did not conceal from Hooker the forward movement by the head of Lee's army now hurrying toward the Potomac, for while he surmised that the van of the Confederate column was heading toward the shores of Maryland, and asked the President permission to cross in case his suspicions were confirmed, Hooker learned that the main cavalry forces of the South were stationed at Culpeper, and sent Pleasonton in that direction. Halleck refused his consent to cross the river, fearing the menace of the seeming large force which was across the river at Fredericksburg, and the President was induced to concur in this refusal, couching his opinion in words of quaint warning against "taking any risk of being entangled up on the river, like an ox jumped half way over a fence and liable to be torn by dogs, front and rear, without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other."

Pleasonton encountered at Culpeper the main cavalry forces of Lee, together with a large force of infantry. Hooker was now convinced beyond a doubt of Lee's purpose to move down the Shenandoah, either get between him and the national capital by a circuitous route to the north of the Federal command, or to cross the Potomac and invade the North.

Hooker had occupied the Shenandoah valley the winter and spring with his troops, and much time had been consumed by Lee in his unavailing attempts to out-maneuver him; so that, from the time when the Confederates broke camp at Fredericksburg and began the advance northward June 3, it was three weeks before he entered Maryland with his main forces, and instead of crossing the Potomac east of the Blue Ridge, he was compelled to ford it at Sheppards-town and Williamsport, ten or fifteen miles to the west, thus materially altering his plans. Besides, General Stuart, who was to guard the passes of the Blue Ridge, to mask the movement of Lee and to harass Hooker, should he attempt to cross the river, had been himself roughly handled, and instead of being able to retard the advance of the Federal Army, he was driven miles away from the main army of Lee—cut off for a fortnight from all communication with it—a circumstance that General Lee referred to frequently afterwards with evident displeasure. With this arm of dependence cut

off for the time, Hooker quickly saw that he should pursue Lee, who had now crossed the Potomac. So he got his army over at Edwards' Ferry, the same place Lee had used for invading Maryland the year before, and almost within sight of the old battle field of Antietam.

The columns under Hill and Longstreet pressed forward hour by hour and united at Hagerstown, whence again they advanced to Chambersburg and rested for some information from Stuart, who was too far away to bring tidings of the movements of the Union army so devoutly wished for by Lee, now that he so little could rely on the surrounding country, once again hostile to him, and forced to depend so much the more on the strategy, swiftness of movement and trustworthiness of his cavalry command. The southern army had advanced so far into the state of Pennsylvania by this time that Hooker was eager to attack his base of supplies, and thus weaken Lee's advance and invasion, and so he asked for every available man to enlist and swell the Army of the Potomac to the greatest proportions.

At Harper's Ferry ten thousand men were stationed under French, and the forces under Hooker and Lee were so evenly balanced that an additional ten thousand men might easily turn the tide of battle at a critical juncture. Hooker felt this situation keenly, and asked for the garrison at the "Ferry" to help resist Lee's onslaught. Halleck interposed again and refused permission for the transfer, on the grounds that the fortifications had cost so much money and labor that he could not consent to giving them up except under the direst necessity. Hooker forthwith thereafter sent to Washington two dispatches, one asking for the force at Harper's Ferry and another of same day and hour, tendering his resignation as commander of the Army of the Potomac. If Halleck would not add French's 10,000 to the troops operating against Lee, whose main columns had by this time touched foot upon Pennsylvania soil, he would resign.

President Lincoln had thus placed before him in this critical juncture two alternatives—either that Halleck must be displaced as commander-in-chief or Hooker must vacate the command of the Army of the Potomac. The smaller the change at such an urgent crisis, the less apparent evil, and so Hooker's request to be relieved of command was promptly

granted, and General Meade, of the Second Corps, was placed in immediate command. Viewed simply as a separate act in the great crisis then enveloping, Hooker's move was uncalled for and apparently justified subsequent action by the President. But it cannot well be disassociated from a long series of mistakes and jealousies by and among Lincoln's military advisers in the campaign of the east, through which, day by day, the great man in the White House had to thread his way with patience and hope.

On the appointment of General Meade, not an hour's hesitation ensued in the advance of any portion of the entire army. Hancock was put in command of the Second Corps, Reynolds of the First was placed at the left wing of the now concentrating Union forces, while Kilpatrick's cavalry, stationed at Hanover, met and defeated Stuart, yet separated from and in search of Lee's main army.

Early in June a Union force under Milroy and stationed at Winchester, Virginia, had been routed by Ewell and pursued across the Potomac as far as Chambersburg, in Pennsylvania. On the 28th of the month he had reached Carlisle, nearly twenty miles due north of Gettysburg, and was planning a march on Harrisburg, the capital of the state. On the same day Hill had reached Fayetteville, on the Cashtown Road, and was joined by Longstreet the following day. From Gettysburg, thirty miles away, could now be seen the camp fires on the eastern side of the mountain, and the enemy swarmed over the country with his foraging parties. The cloud of war so long gathering in might and blackness was soon to burst in fury on some part of the devoted neighborhood of Gettysburg.

It will be recalled that Lee and Hooker crossed the Potomac but a few miles apart, and within twenty-four hours of each other, Lee keeping west of South Mountain and Hooker to the east. This plan General Meade carried forward in faithful detail. The line of march of the two armies was therefore nearly parallel, with mountains between them, and each commander for a few days knew but little of the movements of the other. Lee, having some days the start, was considerably northward of Meade, when the latter, by a rapid march westward through the passes, could throw his left forces at the rear of Lee, effectually cutting him off from his

supplies, thereby wholly isolating him in a hostile country. Tidings of this purpose reached Lee the night of June 28, and he at once saw that his plan of invasion must now halt till he engage and drive away Meade's harassing forces at his rear. The entire Confederate command was therewith directed to mass to the eastward, Ewell coming southward from Carlisle.

The town of Gettysburg occupies, as it were, the hub of a wheel, from which radiate in all directions, like the spokes of a wheel, roads to the northwest in the direction of Chambersburg, northeastward to Harrisburg, southwest to the Potomac and southeast to Baltimore and the sea. Whoever held Gettysburg held, if he realized it, the key to a campaign, the salient values of which lay in possessing Culp's Hill to the east, the Round Tops to the south, together with the long, low lying, rocky ridge stretching from the latter northward to the old cemetery at the edge of the town.

It chanced that one soldier, and that of the army of Meade, had studied the topography of the region, and he had made up his mind that Gettysburg was the spot whereat, if it could be so maneuvered, the battle was to be waged. This soldier was the only person, it so happened, who could have ordered events so that the contest take place there. That man was Alfred Pleasonton, now commanding the cavalry corps; the man by whom the fierce onslaught of Stonewall Jackson at Chancellorsville had been stayed.

Shortly before noon of the 30th of June, General Buford, in reconnoitering along the Chambersburg Road, passed through Gettysburg; not, however, before seeing by incipient skirmishes and challenges with the Confederates that the battle lines were rapidly drawing to an inevitable conflict at an early moment. He spent the afternoon protecting Reynolds' occupancy of a position on Marsh Creek northeast of the town, there to wait the dawn of the morrow.

Buford was the first to meet a considerable force of Confederates the morning of July 1, being very shortly reinforced by Reynolds, who had now come up from the Emmitsburg Road and his night camp. So clearly did Reynolds discern the importance of holding the town that he personally took command of his division, riding horseback, to aid Buford. Not many minutes had elapsed till a sharpshooter's

bullet killed him, and the command devolved on Doubleday, while Howard took charge of the action in the field. Meade, who had heard near noon of Reynolds' death, sent Hancock, "the superb," who, with Howard, deployed their forces so strategically that Cemetery Hill should be saved to the Union troops that night, even though sorrowful repulses were incurred during the day farther northward and outside the town.

By 1 o'clock of the morning of July 2 Meade reached the scene after riding fourteen miles from Taneytown. Having received accurate information of the topography of the grounds, and intelligence of the progress of the battle, and being fully and completely informed by Hancock and Howard of the favorable character of the position, Meade determined to give battle to Lee at this place. The remaining corps of the arms were dispatched to hasten forward with all speed. Few were the moments given to sleep during the waning hours of that brief midsummer night by either officers or men, though half of the Union troops were exhausted by the conflict of the first day and the remainder wearied by the forced marches which had brought them to the rescue. The full moon, veiled by thin clouds, shone that night on a strangely unwonted scene. The silence of the graveyard was broken by the heavy tramp of armed men, by the neigh of the war horse, the harsh rattle of the wheels of artillery hurrying to their stations, and all the indescribable tumult of preparation. The Sixth Corps, that of Sedgwick, was the last to arrive, having marched thirty-four miles since 9 o'clock the evening before his arrival, causing the numbers of the forces of Meade to approach that of the command of Lee.

It might be profitable at this point to again call attention to the increased isolation of Lee's army, so far from a home base of supplies. He was really driven to a choice of one of three courses of action: He must attack the Union army in their strong position along a higher ridge than existed anywhere within rifle range of Meade, or draw them from it by continuing his march and threaten Washington and Baltimore, or he must retreat across the Potomac into Virginia. The third course would be complete abandonment of the enterprise which had been so deliberately undertaken; the

second was strongly urged by Hood, but it would be only prolonging the suspense, for an action must soon take place somewhere, and the enemy would, without doubt, grow stronger in their fortification day by day. Lee decided on the first resolve, the controlling motive and factor in the decision being found in the temper of the men of his army, who had won a series of decisive victories, among which they even counted Antietam. At Fredericksburg, with but a fraction of their available force, they had beaten Burnside, though they held a position largely in their favor; at Chancellorsville, with two-thirds their present number, they had foiled and driven Hooker away, whose force was known to be much larger than now counted under the command of Meade. There they had successfully attacked the northern army in their intrenchments. Why should they not do so now with equal success?

So, on the 2d day of July, Longstreet was ordered to assail the extreme Federal left, while Ewell was to make at the same time a demonstration on the right, fully five miles away. Edward Everett, in his careful analysis of the battle, recited at the dedication of the national cemetery four months later, dwells on the merciful inactivity of the Confederates the greater part of the second day, affording the wearied Union troops time to rest and be ready for the great conflict which was to inaugurate July 3. Had Lee chosen to renew the battle at daybreak July 2, in attacking the Union center, with the First and Eleventh Corps exhausted by battle and by retreat the evening before, the Third and Twelfth weary from their forced march, and the Second, Fifth and Sixth not yet arrived, nothing but a miracle could have saved the Union army from disaster. But the day dawned cool and refreshing, the hours of the morning passed, the forenoon and a considerable part of the afternoon wore away, with the merest evidence of activity manifested in nothing except the occasional booming of cannon, for there were intermittent skirmishes between outposts of either side intercepting detachments of the other, rushing to column and to designated position for the inevitable grand assault. During this comforting period of rest and inactivity fully half of the Federal forces were gotten into line from scattered positions all about, in season for the successful onslaught of July 3.

At 4 o'clock on the afternoon of the 2d, however, the work of death began, in the attack by Longstreet's men on the Union left near Little Round Top, to resist which General Sickles struck out for a spirited attack, but was himself soon borne from the field with a shattered limb. There was smart fighting at the base of Little Round Top, and the entire assault of the afternoon was fierce and murderous while it lasted, but by nightfall the Union advantage was decisive. Little Round Top was still ours and the Union left had not been broken or driven back. Strangely enough, Little Round Top, the key to the proposed field of battle, was unoccupied the greater part of the day, and if the enemy could gain that, a few guns planted on that eminence could enfilade the whole Union army as far as Cemetery Hill. It so happened that Warren, with a few signal men, in his capacity as army engineer, had reconnoitered the neighborhood and reached the summit of Little Round Top in time to take in the extreme perils of the situation. The Confederates were already trying to climb the great boulders that surmounted the eminence, and some aides who were rushing to assist Sickles were hastily summoned to scale the summit, amidst the wildest hand-to-hand fighting imaginable ensuing among the gray granite boulders piled up in almost impenetrable confusion. The small Union force quickly exhausted their ammunition and a bayonet charge put them in possession of this coveted barren cliff, which was to aid materially in the victory of the following and final day.

The morning of the 3d of July came, and with it Lee planned the same sortie as the day before. Ewell was to press his advantage against the extreme Union right, while the main assault was to be directed against the Union center. But Meade assumed the aggressive and early in the forenoon drove Ewell out of his position near the seminary north of the town. As this was over two miles away and not in sight of Lee's headquarters, that commander received no tidings all the forenoon of the mishap to Ewell, whereby one-third of his effective force was put out of reach of aiding at the critical juncture of the coming afternoon. General Lee supposed that Ewell would materially aid by threatening, if not actually attacking the Union right, and went rapidly forward all morning till noon in anticipation of striking Meade's center

south of the cemetery, and now posted along the ridge by that name. The Emmitsburg Road—or, as better known, Seminary Ridge—was an admirable height for massing Lee's one hundred fifty guns, while Meade could only place eighty guns at a time along Cemetery Ridge opposing his, so uneven and rocky were the outcroppings of the high places there. But Meade must have felt the security of his higher position and now slightly superior force. Each side waited through that anxious forenoon, a stretch of field of grain lying between. Silence and the blue sky smiled down from above.

Suddenly Lee's one hundred fifty guns opened a terrific cannonading, ranged all along Seminary Ridge, filling the air with shot and shell, till the very skies seemed vibrant with the whistling, screaming, howling thunder, mingled with smoke too dense for the eye to penetrate and heat too intense, apparently, for human endurance. The center of the fire had been directed at Hancock's artillery, posted along the slightly higher, but unrepenting, Cemetery Ridge. The compliment was shortly returned with a tremendous fire from the Union batteries and from Little Round Top—indeed, scattered along as far to the northward as Culp's Hill—all told, a mile and a half of “belching, bellowing death.” All at once the Union batteries stopped their terrific roar; the skies partially cleared, and Lee surmised that the halt was due to the exhaustion of Meade's men or shortage of ammunition, or both. But Meade had merely ordered the guns retired for a time to cool them and clean their hot and sooty throats for further challenge and combat.

Then came Lee's fatal decision to send an infantry mass across the fields of that intervening mile between the two lines of artillery to storm the Union center. Against the advices of Longstreet and others of Lee's corps commanders, General Pickett, with seventeen thousand of the very flower of the southern army, was asked to charge across the mid-lying plain with his infantry. It would look as if Lee, mistaking the silence of Meade's artillery for exhaustion or retreat, felt that he could storm Cemetery Ridge at Meade's center, carry the breastworks there, put the Federals to flight, follow up his advantage, scatter Meade's forces, set out for Philadelphia and Baltimore, descend upon Washington, name the terms of capitulation, and end the war.

That was a vision of military destiny bristling with amazing possibilities, the correctness or error of which would mark the triumph or fall of the cause he held so dear. He chose the fatal alternative—to send Pickett across that murderous slope. The world knows the result—how at 3 o'clock the fire of artillery had died away and the smoke lifted, revealing Pickett starting on his sweeping challenge across the low level plain at the Union front, converging in two brilliant ranks as proudly they marched in close columns and by divisions. At the same moment the guns of Lee thundered their faithful rear support, and were answered almost on the instant by the artillery along Cemetery Ridge manned by Federal gunners, a war chorus of carnage and death, blaring, blazing, killing, filling the heavens with the shock of the mighty spectacle; belching forth a pitiless fire of iron hail, canister and grape, into the human ranks below. Men and whole groups of men dropped as though mowed down by some mighty sickle, and that was before the days of the machine gun, too. Now dozens, now hundreds, drop dead and dying from exploding missiles and raking fire, their places repeatedly closed up and occupied by surviving comrades. Still, on they come, with colors flying and bayonets gleaming in the sun, keeping lines nearly as straight as if on parade. Over fences and ditches they come, but still their lines do not break. For a moment all is hushed along the Union lines as the soldiers in blue gaze admiringly at these brave fighters in a forlorn charge. On, on they come! Now can be heard their officers' commands, "Steady, boys, steady!" They reach a place within one hundred yards of the Union infantry, a constantly decimating body of serried columns now distinctly wavering. "Fire!" rings down the line of Meade's eager battalions, and, rising as one man, the rifles of the old Second Corps ring a death knell for many a brave heart in butternut dress worthy of a better fate—a knell that must echo in hearts of many mothers, sisters and wives on many a plantation in the once fair and sunny South, where there will be weeping and wailing for the soldier who is not to return.

What a merciless torrent of lead was poured into that living windrow of men! By and by the lines come up thinner and thinner, break quicker and are longer in forming. By

fortunes almost unbelievable one hundred fifteen of Pickett's men struggle to the successful ascent of a bit of stone ledge, clubbing their way to the very heart of the Union center. They were in a few seconds overpowered and captured, but not till the gallant leader, Armistead, who had led them, his hat stuck on the point of his sword and hoisted aloft, cheering—not till he had fallen, mortally wounded, torn to pieces, it is said, by a shot from Webb's battery, fired by Lieutenant Cushing, who, holding for a moment his own torn bowels in place, shouted to his superior for time to give the enemy "just one more shot," and who then himself fell back dead beside his gun!

The "high water mark of the Confederacy" had been reached. Pickett's shattered fragments fell back. Lee saw his fearful mistake, but galloped up and down his broken ranks that late afternoon, cheering by his presence and inspiration the men who gathered themselves for retreat across the Potomac, never again to threaten the North with invasion. The capitulation of Vicksburg at nearly the same hour turned also and in the same direction the fortunes of the war *for the Union*, in the maneuvers of the Army of the West under Grant. That growing commander was soon brought to the eastern work, and from July 3, 1863, forward the course of Union grew, battle after battle, victory after victory, into the glory of a reunited nation, a more perfect Union!

Appomattox became inevitable.

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Upon the sides of the wooden archway to the cemetery that was in Gettysburg long years before the historic battle, the soldiers with a grim smile read on the opening days of July fifty years ago the solemn warning that "All persons found using firearms in these grounds will be prosecuted with the utmost rigor of the law." This gateway became the key to the Federal lines, the very center of the cruelest use of firearms yet seen on this continent. On the first day Reynolds had discovered the strategic value of Cemetery Hill in case of attack and retreat. Howard posted his reserves here and Hancock greatly strengthened the position as a fortification against attack. One hundred twenty Confederate guns were turned against it that last afternoon and in five minutes

every man of the Federals had been forced to cover. For one and one-half hours the shells fell fast thereabouts, dealing death and laying waste the summer verdure in the little graveyard. Up to the very guns of the Federals on Cemetery Hill, Pickett had led his devoted troops; the night of the third day it was one vast slaughter field. On this eminence thousands were buried at the close of the titanic struggle.

It came to the mind of Judge David Wills, of Gettysburg, to first suggest the creation of a national cemetery on the battlefield, and, under the direction and co-operation of Governor Curtin, he purchased the land, to the amount of over six hundred acres, for Pennsylvania and other states whose sons had died in the great battle. A formal dedication had been planned for October 23 following the battle, but Edward Everett, who had been chosen to deliver the oration, had engagements for that date, and at his suggestion the occasion was postponed to November 19. On the 9th of November Judge Wills wrote to the President, advising him that the exercises would "doubtless be very imposing and solemnly impressive," and that "after the oration" by Mr. Everett he was invited "as the chief executive of the nation to formally set apart these grounds to their sacred use *by a few appropriate remarks.*" Judge Wills invited the President to be a guest at his house during his stay in Gettysburg, and added that both Mr. Everett and Governor Curtin would share the same hospitality.

Except during the great battle, the little town had never had such an outpouring of visitors as on the day when Lincoln visited Gettysburg. Secretary Seward was present also, and while he had been suspected by some of being luke-warm toward the yet-much-talked-of emancipation program, his opinion was sounded forth in no uncertain tones on this occasion, when the crowd at his front while he spake heard him predict the early end of the war, and that the end of the war would see the extermination of slavery, and that "when that cause for the war is removed, simply by the process of abolishing it, as the origin and agent of the treason that is without justification and without parallel, we shall henceforth be united, be only one country, having only one hope, one ambition, one destiny."

The train from Washington contained four coaches. No one saw Mr. Lincoln *en route* engaged on his speech. He carried notes of it in his pocket, such as he had hastily written down the day before leaving the capital, and completed the "remarks" in lead pencil, on "fool's cap" paper, the morning of the 19th at the Wills home, between 9 and 10 o'clock in the forenoon. The procession arrived at the grand stand erected for the occasion near the wooden archway to the cemetery, and moved slowly through the streets of the town, reaching the place of making the speeches at 11 o'clock. Edward Everett, the orator of the day, came half an hour later, and, with the details of arranging the different marching bodies of visitors and visiting delegations, it was noon when Mr. Everett rose to speak, an effort occupying two hours and four minutes. A piece of martial music by the band came next, after which the President arose for his "few remarks." He carried a paper in his hands, which might suggest to many who heard him that he was reading his speech, but some nearest him, including his private secretary, declare he spoke without help from his notes.

From the character of the invitation to the President it was entirely natural for everyone to expect that Lincoln's part would be a few perfunctory remarks, the mere official formality of dedication. There is every probability that the assemblage regarded Mr. Everett as the mouthpiece, the organ of expression of the thought and feeling of the hour, and took it for granted that the President was there as the merest figure head, the culminating decoration, so to speak, of the elaborately planned pageant and procession of the day. They were therefore totally unprepared for what they heard, and could not immediately realize that *his* words, and not those of the carefully chosen orator, were to carry the concentrated thought of the occasion like a trumpet peal to farthest posterity.

There is ample grounds for Lincoln's enduring pre-eminence and leadership, for, while in his own years he was a national character, we are beginning to assign him a place in the niche of the great of all ages and nations. When he was thrust forward to lead the American people he found himself called to face a new peril to the interests of mankind. The conspiracy against the integrity of national life was

a threat to all the world. It was an attempt to break down the warp and woof of national unity and undo the work of centuries. It would be a reaction from that splendid work which had been achieved in old Attican days, all along the way of twenty-five hundred years of strife and war. For the world had been learning how men could live in fraternity and had been incorporating that experience into its laws and institutions. From individual life to associated interests in the family; from family to clan; and from clan to tribe and nation, common interest, common striving, had brought a larger portion of peace and tranquillity.

And so the American Union, the consummation of all the struggles of men toward a state of universal peace, was the life, an aspiration of all the world organized into a nation. This union maintained, all other nations might go on and enter the portals of permanent peace and gather hope and success from righteous diligence in ways unknown to pillage and devastation. Destroy this union, and its ruins would block the way to progress, and delay the advance of nations toward a governmental ideal for perhaps a thousand years.

It is precisely here that we come upon the character of the great war President. How easy in such an hour, says John Coleman Adams, "for the wisest to make mistakes! How easy to undervalue the real signs of the times, and to be the fools of fate by following the lures of the crafty or the stupid! * * * To stand upon the swinging deck when the rising gales are roaring in one's ears; when the threatening cloud just skims the wave and the wave tosses up to the cloud; when the blinding wrack of foam sweeps against the breath, and the eye can scarcely see the swaying compass as the ship goes plunging among hidden reefs; when the hardest sailor turns his back and the coolest is confused, uncertain, anxious or appalled; to be cool, to be clear—to read the signs of the trackless sea, and, undaunted by the play of all these raging elements and these distracting dangers, to guide the keel straight down the channels where lie safety and salvation—this marks the man of God's own making, called forth to be the helmsman for a stormy hour, the pilot of mighty destinies, and such was Lincoln."

He it was who saw, from the moment he became convinced of the intentions of the South, the one imperative absolute

aim he must keep in view, and that transcendent issue was the preservation of the Union. For therein was the vindication of the great principle of the pacific federation of states for the cultivation of a larger life of order and fraternity. Abraham Lincoln's clear, unerring eye perceived the meaning of the struggle. His strong mind grasped its import. His steadfast soul clung to that purpose with a tenacity that could be expressed only in some such words as Saint Paul used when he said, "This one thing I do"!

And so we come to the day and occasion of the great address. Perhaps Lincoln felt with sad joy the waning fortunes of the opposing forces, and that his few words could but cement the friendship of the survivors of both sides of the carnage of those terrible July days on this battlefield of Pennsylvania, where brothers in blue and brothers in gray of those still continuing the struggle must look back with longing eyes and sweet memories to brave comrades dying for a cause dear to them. Perhaps Lincoln's great vision of peace led him to speak in a vein of half prophecy, as, peering into the distant years of the future, when peace should perch on the banners of the North, the time would come when the tumult of war would echo back in anthems of peace; a time when the blue and the gray should mingle in a common repulse of a foreign nation whose pitiless colonial policy dinned into our ears the crying need of reform in the islands of the tropic sea.

Mayhap he could see with farther vision the splendid spectacle of nineteen hundred thirteen, when Gettysburg again became the rendezvous of countless thousands, this time of half a hundred thousand whose lives had been mercifully spared to celebrate a veterans' semi-centennial on the old battlefield; of hundreds of thousands of the patriotic, the young and the gay, swelling into one grand chorus of joy over the cemented friendships of the war, keenly appreciative of the blessings of a united nation and a happy land.

Gettysburg on its fiftieth anniversary is the most completely marked battlefield in the world. More than six hundred memorial shafts and memorial stones have been erected by regiments, states, companies and batteries. Nearly four thousand warriors lie sleeping on the hill which was dedicated by the President as a national cemetery. Today the

battleground is a great national park, covering 24,460 acres, which, when improvements are completed, will be seamed with more than one hundred miles of macadamized roads and "battle avenues." Here and there are giant observatory towers, from which the sightseer may gaze upon the battle field as it looked to the warriors on the hill crests half a century ago.

It is the memory of the three mighty days of July, 1863, and the favorable turn of affairs in the destiny of national life as its immediate consequence, that causes the patriot to walk, as it were, with unshod feet amidst this American Marathon, which lies cradled in the gentle slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains in southern Pennsylvania. Away to the south the mountain roads over which Meade and Lee led their armies pass over the border line into Maryland.

Today, the broad fields of wheat and the orchards testify to the thrift of the country folk; sheep graze on the hill-sides, and cattle bend over the clear, cool water in creeks that once ran crimson with the blood of brothers "who struggled here" on the greatest battle ground of the western hemisphere.

It was a supreme pleasure for the writer of this article to be present those momentous days of the celebration; to have seen the fragment of Pickett's men "charge" in a feeble way now, but *friendly*, over the same ground where, half a century ago at the same hour there were thousands struggling in war's awful spectacle. There was demonstrated in outpouring affection for one another that peculiarly intelligent and righteous impulse which is usually thought of when we call it the American spirit which had borne successfully the test of fratricidal strife, and which had come away victorious over its own baser elements, in the reconstruction of a stronger nationality, now pervaded by honest and concerted motives, stimulated by high resolves, waiting expectantly at every gate of American opportunity!

It was worth while for Lincoln to take time to come to these hills and cheer up the hearts of the North by his prophetic eloquence; it was worth while for Woodrow Wilson to come thither on the nation's last holiday, to the same scenes, under vastly changed conditions, and point the way to present and future patriotic duty in the demands of an

era of peace. It was a pleasure and a delight for more than fifty thousand surviving veterans of both sides to again fraternize there at Gettysburg in a week of semi-centennial reminiscence, and to pledge anew a common fealty to our great republic, now an unbreakable and indissoluble Union.

The great President of our own day added his ennobling words as the very final act of semi-centennial celebration, in an appeal that touched all hearts, when he said:

“Lift your eyes to the great tracts of life yet to be conquered in the interest of righteous peace, of that prosperity which lies in a people’s hearts and outlasts all wars and errors of men.”

And as if to set forth the spirit of the future to those of the world’s action and responsibility and leadership of our own happy time, he added this invitation:

“Come, let us be comrades and soldiers yet to serve our fellow men in quiet counsel, where the blare of trumpets is neither heard nor heeded, and where the things are done which make blessed the nations of the world in peace and righteousness and love.”